DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 591 CS 205 231

AUTHOR Schwarzlose, Richard A.
TITLE The Nation's First Wire Service: Evidence Supporting a Footnote.
PUB DATE Aug 79
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (62nd, Houston, TX, August 5-8, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Journalism; Newspapers; *News Reporting; Primary Sources; *Telecommunication; *United States History

ABSTRACT

The Associated Press's claim that it is the oldest wire service in the United States (tracing its origin to formation of the New York City Associated Press in 1848) has been regularly sustained in journalism's history literature. This claim has been challenged by Alfred McClung Lee in his book "The Daily Newspaper in America," in which he contends that an obscure group of editors in upstate New York formed the pioneer wire service in the nation. This claim is supported by a collection of letters and documents at the Oneida Historical Society in Utica, New York, which places the founding of the New York State Associated Press in February and March of 1846--two months prior to the appearance of the earliest shared telegraphic dispatch in New York City newspapers and 26 months before the Associated Press's self-proclaimed birth. The documents reveal a developing wire service that altered its structure to accommodate the growing telegraphic network in upstate New York. When the line was completed only between Albany and Utica, the Utica editor express-mailed proofs of his telegraphic news columns to participating newspapers west of him. Later, when the line was complete from Albany to Buffalo, a meeting of editors in the region established a formal organization that bargained with the telegraph company for rates and handling of news dispatches and employed correspondents in Albany and New York City. (Appendixes contain copies of two dispatches from the early wire service.) (Author/FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED177591

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE NATION'S FIRST WIRE SERVICE: EVIDENCE SUPPORTING A FOOTNOTE

By

Richard A. Schwarzlose

School of Journalism
Northwestern University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Richard A. Schwarzlose

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Presented to the History Division, Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Houston, Texas, August 1979.

CS205231

The Nation's First Wire Service: Evidence Supporting a Footnote

In his detailed and valuable 1937 book, The Daily Newspaper in America, Alfred McClung Lee makes the following statement:

> The Associated Press of New York City developed directly from the earlier newspaper combines and the [Alexander] Jones and [Daniel H.] Craig private agencies, but the "first" press association for telegraphic newsgathering arose spontaneously as the natural solution of a problem. . . . [T]his A.P. antedated the A.P. of New York City by more than a year. . . . [T]his association pioneered in . . . cooperative wire service.[1]

The AP organization Lee refers to here is an upstate group of editors which eventually became the New York State Associated Press. Lee uses two documents to support his assertion that an organization other than the New York AP, progenitor of today's AP, deserves credit for being the "pioneer" American wire service. Lee cites S. N. D. North's History and Present Condition of the Newspaper and Periodical Press of the United States of 1884[2] which in turn cites on page 106 an 1878 address by Alexander Seward,[3] a founder of this first wire service.

Lee's careful research had unearthed evidence to challenge the frequently voiced claim of the Associated Press, repeated in its house history of 1940, as "the first real co-operative news-gathering organization."[4] In the forty years since Lee's book appeared, however, the significance -- even the identity -- of this upstate AP that predated the AP of New York City has again slipped into the background in the literature. Frank Luther Mott focusses on the New York City AP, relegating the earlier upstate organization to a footnote which reads:

> There had been an upstate association of papers located

> between Buffalo and Albany for the same purpose before the successful New York Associated Press was organized.[5]

The footnote suggests that the earlier upstate organization might not have been successful. This paper will show that it was successful.

The Emerys also emphasize AP's New York City origins, discussing the upstate activity as follows:

> The telegraph line reached Buffalo in July and the Albany-New York leg opened in September [1846]. To share the costs, the publisher at Utica and others between Albany and Buffalo organized themselves and employed news agents in New York and Albany.[6]

This passage suggests that organization followed completion of the Albany-New York telegraph line in September, 1846, thus marking its beginning four months after identical telegraphic news dispatches began appearing in several New York City dailies[7] -- the latter appearance giving evidence of the existence of a New York City wire service.[8] This paper will place the birth of the upstate AP two months before the first appearance of those identical dispatches in New York City.

Based on primary source material, this paper will: (1) support Lee's contention that the upstate editors organized the nation's first wire service; (2) examine the formation of this upstate organization, noting that it survived as a separate wire service entity until 1897; and (3) provide some insight on how newspaper editors greeted the new-fangled telegraph in 1846.

Historians will attend to the various activities of journalism's leaders, and it is inevitable with the passage of time that the birth of the Associated Press in New York City will draw the attention of journalism's literature since that birth was attended by such New York

press luminaries as James Gordon Bennett, Henry J. Raymond, James Watson Webb, Frederic Hudson, David Hale, and Gerard Hallock.

Lee's thin thread of footnote evidence, on the other hand, leads back to an obscure Utica, New York, speech by an upstate editor who claimed to have helped organize the first wire service. In the speech, however, the editor refers to correspondence outlining the founding of the New York State AP, correspondence which he had deposited with the Oneida Historical Society in Utica three months earlier. The author has examined those documents and bases this paper primarily on that collection.[9]

* * *

In a narrow band stretching west of Albany through the Mohawk Valley and arching gracefully toward Buffalo at the eastern end of Lake Erie, a national lifeline of trade and migration was established in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. The Erie Canal opened in October, 1825, connecting Buffalo with Albany (and thence with New York City via the Hudson River) and giving the upstate region its first commercial transfusion. Railway service was extended along the same path beginning in 1831. The communities that developed along this lifeline were not backwoods villages, but thriving commercial and agricultural centers. The dynamic upstate growth in the 1830s and 1840s is described in New York's ten-volume history as follows:

> A conspicuous line of changing community life across the state was the area immediately along the waterways between Buffalo and New York City. . . . Most of these communities were built to serve as distributing points to the agricultural population, and, on account of their advantageous location for assembling materials and marketing products, they developed into manufacturing centers. Thus it was that Buffalo, Syracuse, Oswego, Auburn, Utica and Rochester became cities of importance.[10]

This region was blessed a third time in 1845 when it was chosen as the location for one of the earliest lines of telegraph. Samuel F. B. Morse had successfully operated his telegraph between Washington and Baltimore in the spring of 1844 and during the next year Morse and his associates sold rights for the construction of five arterial telegraph routes, all using Morse equipment. One such franchise was awarded to the New York, Albany and Buffalo Telegraph Company, whose name describes the route it was to construct.[11]

The company was headed by Theodore S. Faxton, Utica financier, and John J. Butterfield, owner of a Utica-based express company. With Faxton rapidly acquiring the region's financial backing for his venture and promoting the project zealously, and with Ezra Cornell and Orrin S. Wood, two respected early telegraph technicians, attending to materials and construction matters with experience and dedication, the line quickly became the most profitable and reliable of Morse's five original lines. An enthusiastic Morse, writing to associate Alfred Vail in October, 1846, reported receipts on the Faxton-Butterfield line for twenty-three days of $2,900, enough after expenses to show a 14 per cent profit.[12]

James D. Reid, an early telegraph proprietor and historian, indicates the line's technical quality in the following way:

> [F]rom the time of the opening of the line until March, 1847, it had worked so well and on the whole so uniformly, that Professor Morse spent much of his leisure time in the office in New York, quietly enjoying the fruition of his work, and regarded this as his pet line. Its working quality was superior to most other lines.[13]

The 1840s saw a sizable collection of daily newspapers appearing

in the rapidly growing communities along the Faxton-Butterfield telegraph line, as the following table indicates:[14]

	POPULATION			
Community	1840	1850	% Increase	Daily Newspapers in 1846
Albany	33,721	50,763	50.5%	American Citizen,* Argus, Atlas, Herald, Journal, Knickerbocker
Troy	19,334	28,785	48.9	Budget, Post, Whig
Utica	12,782	17,565	37.4	Gazette
Syracuse	n.a.	22,271	--	Journal, Star
Auburn	5,626	9,548	69.7	Advertiser, Tocsin
Rochester	20,191	36,403	80.5	Advertiser, American, Democrat
Buffalo	18,213	42,261	132.0	Commercial Advertiser, Courier & Pilot,** Democrat, Express, Morning Gazette

* Longevity of the American Citizen is unclear; the most recent extant copy is June 17, 1846.

** The Courier and Pilot merged June 27, 1846.

Butterfield had contracted with the Morse interests for the upstate New York Morse rights on May 30, 1845, and by August 27, 1845, when the first organizational meeting of the telegraph company convened in Utica, telegraph wire was on the verge of linking Utica and Little Falls (20 miles) and Buffalo and Lockport (22 miles).[15]

Work continued on all sections of the Albany-Buffalo section of the line during the winter, the first major leg (Utica to Albany) completed on January 31, 1846. On February 3, the Utica Gazette, with Seward and Rufus Northway as co-owners, carried nearly a column of telegraphic news from the state capital. It was the first such journalistic event west of Albany. Looking back on that moment thirty years later, Seward commented that the telegraph "offered great benefits to the local newspapers, but it required a compensation which in their

then feeble condition they were unable single-handed to pay."[16]

The rise of cooperative wire services at this period in cities and regions along the Eastern Seaboard was largely in response to telegraph's early cost, which although offering the press a preferential rate structure, exacted a substantial toll from the editor who wanted to gather all of his telegraphic news on his own.

Immediately after that February 3 column of telegraphic news appeared in the Gazette, Northway and Seward received four requests from newspapers to the west for subscriptions to the paper or exchange arrangements. On February 5 the Buffalo Pilot sent one dollar for the Gazette to be forwarded in specially marked Pilot envelopes.[17] The next day the Rochester Advertiser wrote, "We are desirous of getting an exchange with your daily, for the purpose of making up our legislative summary from your telegraphic postscript."[18]

The Auburn Daily Cayuga Tocsin on February 7 requested a three-month exchange with the Gazette,[19] and on February 12 the Buffalo Courier asked to receive the Utica paper.[20]

These four western journals appear alert to the prospect of securing a large and more timely news report from the east by using the Gazette's access to the telegraph line. But, judging from the table on page 5, eight of their neighbors and competitors were not as wide-awake about this prospect. Meanwhile, at least two progressive editors could see that newspaper subscriptions and exchanges were instantly outdated by telegraph's arrival. Early in February Isaac Butts, editor of the Rochester Advertiser, one of the four papers that had sought the Gazette's telegraphic news, went by train to Albany, apparently to see what he could do to expedite receipt of the news from the east for his paper. Enroute he stopped in Utica and talked with Northway and Seward, who

apparently also had news movement on their minds. Writing from Albany on February 11, Butts told the Gazette's management:

> I shall make no arrangements here connected with the telegraph as I understand you will be willing to transmit all intelligence to my paper. . . . It is useless to have two conflicting agencies and I hope you will continue to do as you proposed on my way down [to Albany].[21]

The plan both papers were contemplating consisted of securing the services of an Albany newsman who would complie a daily telegraphic news report for the western papers from whatever was available in Albany. Apparently Northway and Seward had convinced Butts that their paper was the logical organizer of this enterprise, sitting as it was at that time at the western terminus of the completed telegraph line.

In the weeks that following the Utica Gazette sent several circulars to editors to the west, solociting their support for a plan to hire an Albany correspondent who would compile and telegraph daily to the Gazette a news dispatch. The paper, in turn, would print news slips (proof sheets) of its telegraphic news column to be express mailed on the westbound train leaving Utica during the evening.[22] Response to this scheme was cautious and mixed — an indication that editors did not automatically welcome the infant telegraph with its technical and financial complications.

The first paper to sign up was the Syracuse Daily Star, whose editor, James Kinney, wrote on February 17 saying he would share in "the expense . . . but cannot at present say how much I can give." The Star would pay its fair share for a while "until the experiment had a fair trial."[23] The next day the Auburn Tocsin agreed to participate, noting that the Tocsin's editor had contacted Faxton of the telegraph

company on the subject of news dispatches and that Faxton had referred him to the Utica Gazette. The telegraph people apparently both knew of, and were cooperating with, the Gazette's attempt to form a wire service.[24]

Acceptances came in slowly. The Rochester Democrat signed on on February 19,[25] the Buffalo Pilot on March 4,[26] the Auburn Advertiser on March 6,[27] the Buffalo Gazette on March 7,[28] the Rochester American on March 12,[29] and the Syracuse Journal on March 20.[30]

During these early weeks it is not clear who in Albany prepared the news dispatch for transmission to Utica, but sometime during March the Gazette engaged William Lacy, an employee of the Albany Daily Argus, to compile and file the dispatch. With Lacy on the job, editors along the telegraph-railway system could expect up-to-date Albany news and a professionally prepared digest of the New York City and Boston papers. The upstate editors paid Lacy $28 in April and $12 in June for his services.[31] Records show that Lacy was still employed by the upstate AP in December, 1846. In 1851 Alexander Jones, general agent for the New York (City) Associated Press, listed Lacy as the Albany correspondent for his wire service.[32]

On March 7, 1846, therefore, seven newspapers (including the Utica Gazette) were sharing the expense of a common telegraph-mail news dispatch, and sometime in the near future they would be employing an Albany correspondent. The letters to Northway and Seward indicate that the Utica Gazette began forwarding news slips to a newspaper as soon as its request to participate arrived in Utica. By any definition one wishes to apply, this arrangement constituted a wire service.[33] And by mentioning the March 7 date, the author places the existence of this wire service two months prior to the earliest shared telegraphic dispatch among New York City newspapers (appearing on May 7, 1846).[34]

Nine upstate newspapers had combined forces by April 1, 1846, to forward news from Albany. This is the best Northway and Seward could do until late in the summer when the line was completed from Buffalo to Albany. Nine is just short of two-thirds of the fourteen papers west of Troy listed on page 5 of this paper. Much of the resistance to the scheme arose in Buffalo where, according to the record, editors were especially contentious and reactionary. Beyond this general propensity of the city's editors, however, Buffalo encountered technical handicaps initially with the scheme. In February only one train a day reached Buffalo from Rochester, and because of the rail schedule to the east, the Utica Gazette's news slips were delayed in Rochester one full day. Early in March, however, a second train began service to Buffalo, giving that city's morning papers the edge on printing the news slips. The Buffalo Pilot and Morning Gazette thus joined the wire service,[35] and the rest of the Buffalo press held out until the telegraph line was opened to that community.

Other sections of the Faxton-Butterfield line were beginning to close ranks. The expressing of news slips would soon be outmoded. The Utica-Syracuse line was the next section opened for traffic. At a meeting on May 28, 1846, the New York State AP[36] editors transferred responsibility for forwarding news slips from the Utica Gazette to the Syracuse newspapers. That section was opened on June 1, 1846.[37]

One month later Buffalo was finally linked to Albany, and the Utica Gazette embraced the feat with unbridled enthusiasm. Under the headline "The Hudson Talking to Lake Erie!" the July 4 Gazette exclaimed:

> The lightning flashed through from Albany to Buffalo, 325 miles by railroad, this morning at 8½ o'clock. The Telegraph now spans the Empire State! The events transpiring at

the Capital, at one end, are made known at the other extremity in "less than no time" -- from twenty minutes to half an hour before they happen.

This is the longest line of telegraph in the world. The swift messengers, upon whose wings messages are sent along the copper track, are bred in a large galvanic battery in the loft of Dudley's Triangle in this city. The fluid there generated makes a circuit of 650 miles. The only object it has in view is to get from one end of the battery into the other, like a carrier-dove returning to the spot where it was trained. This fiery steed, whose speed surpasses the imaginings of tales of the Genii; this mighty agent, whose sports are in the volcano and tornado; this weapon of the ancient king of heaven, forged in the infernal regions;--the utilitarian of our day approaches and says: "I'll trouble you with a line."[38]

Faxton with his typical promotional flair telegraphed the following invitation to editors along the completed line:

T. S. F.'s compliments to the editors of all the daily papers between Albany and Buffalo: will be happy to meet them and their friends at the different telegraph stations, on the Fourth [of July, 1846] between the hours of 4 and 5 P.M. for the purpose of interchange of sentiments.[39]

Faxton's "novel party" on the telegraph was covered the next day in the Utica Gazette with a two-column account under the headline "Electro-magnetic Drama, or a Lightning Sociable."[40]

The New York State AP editors met again on August 5, 1846, in Utica and prepared a formal proposal to Faxton's telegraph company for handling a common daily telegraphic news dispatch for the newspapers

along the new line.

The organization offered Faxton $72 per week to handle 1½ hours of news daily between 8 and 11 p.m. and a "brief report of the market together with such facts in the way of news as have become known at New York during the day" between 2 and 3 p.m. If foreign news arrived in New York, "a little more space" was to be given the report. The proposal specified that the editors would furnish a reporter at Albany.[41]

Faxton, however, apparently had the final word, because two weeks later a circular, distributed to the editors, indicated a $100 weekly assessment by the telegraph company for delivery of the news report. The circular also announced that George M. Snow of the New York Tribune had been hired at $15 per week as the group's New York City correspondent. Snow's salary was to be equally divided among the newspapers.[42] Various letters and records indicate that Snow was attached to the State AP at least up to April 18, 1848, when Snow threatened to sue the Auburn Advertiser for libel for charging him with delaying a foreign news dispatch.[43] Snow had been the Tribune's Wall Street reporter for five years in 1846 and continued at that post until 1863.[44]

The circular concluded with a warning similar to admonitions which over the years would become familiar to those involved in wire services:

> If any paper or papers decline coming into the arrangement on the above terms, the deficiency thereby occasioned to be assessed equally among the remaining papers. It is the understanding that no paper in the above places which does not come into this arrangement is to be furnished with the Telegraph news.[45]

A handwritten tabulation at the bottom of the circular indicates

that there were nineteen members of the New York State AP as of August 18, 1846. They were:

Albany: Argus, Atlas, Herald, Journal, Knickerbocker

Troy: Budget, Post, Whig

Utica: Gazette

Syracuse: Journal, Star

Auburn: Advertiser, Tocsin

Rochester: Advertiser, American, Democrat

Buffalo: Commercial Advertiser, Courier & Pilot, Express[46]

Compared to the table on page 5, the above list includes all but three dailies in these communities in the original State AP membership. The Albany Daily American Citizen may have suspended publication by August, the last known issue of that paper being June 17, 1846.[47] No explanation can be offered for the omission of the Buffalo Democrat and Morning Gazette (a participant in the wire service as of March 7!) from the above list. There is some evidence on the record that some Buffalo papers were acting as agents for other papers in that city, but the information available is too inconclusive to base an explanation on.

Albany was finally linked by telegraph with New York City on September 9, 1846. In the State AP documents is a handwritten financial tabulation for the first five weeks after New York City came on the line. It shows the eight Albany and Troy papers each paying $30.50 for the five weeks; the five Utica, Syracuse and Auburn papers each paying $25.50 for that period; and the six Rochester and Buffalo papers each paying $35.50. Appended to these figures is a notation that five full days of service were lost during these five weeks because of telegraph failure.[48]

The news report being received for these prices was seldom a full column of type. Normally a fifth to a third of the report consisted of the New York City markets. Most items were brief, usually only one-paragraph affairs, and the majority dealt with politics, disasters and an occasional human interest item or act of violence. For some distant or significant news items, the dispatch would indicate how the information had been acquired. The language was stiff, sentences often laden with digressive phrases and clauses. A randomly selected, full telegraphic news report as it appeared in the Utica Gazette on November 2, 1846, is reproduced in the Appendix of this paper.

As with all human schemes, the New York State AP had good days and bad. And a bad day for a journalist can be a disaster. After three substantial dispatches in the telegraphic news column of the November 3, 1846, Utica Gazette, there appeared the following comment:

> The Telegraph got the sulks last night and did as it pleased about handing over the latter part of our report. We managed, however, to get some snatches of, we believe, all the news.

On into 1847 the Gazette's tale of woe grew more melancholy and embittered:

> The Telegraph is in complete order today, but after dancing attendance for hours, we can only get from New York the gratifying intelligence, "No report this A.M." So it goes. When there is any news, the Telegraph is down; when it is in order, there is no report, or "it can't be sent," or it slips through without being taken. We pay ruinously, are as vigilant as possible, but get little for our pains but vexation of spirit. The Telegraph has great capabilities,

> but its particular province seems to be to tantalize those who depend upon it.[49]

And the paper is talking about Morse's "pet line," the pride and joy of the nation's first telegraph empire.

The great plan proposed by the Utica Gazette early in 1846 after that town had been linked to Albany took hold in upstate New York, encompassing two-thirds of the affected papers within two months and involving all but two or three dailies when the state had been spanned by telegraph lines. Some editors failed to see, or refused to acknowledge, the effectiveness or economy of this plan until overwhelmed by technology's advance, but eventually all would understand the value of such an organization.

The New York State AP thus became a model on which all subsequent local, regional and national wire services would be based: it involved an association of journalists (either a membership group as in the case of various AP organizations or a newspaper conglomerate as a proprietor as in the case of United Press, International News Service and United Press International) policing its own fraternity, engaging its own correspondents, setting policy on the nature of its news report, and negotiating as a group with telegraph (and eventually telephone) companies for preferential rates and treatment.

The New York (City) AP began to emerge in the next two years, patterned on the same principle, and in subsequent years other AP groups, representing editors in various regions of the country, followed suit. But the New York City group, with its prestige, powerful friends inside the Western Union Telegraph Co., and its easy access to the important transatlantic steamship corridor and eventually the transatlantic cable, far overshadowed its upstate cousins, its predecessors.

POSTSCRIPT: It is interesting to note that in 1847 the correspondence among these upstate editors, having accomplished a wire service organization, turned to lobbying for lower postal rates for the press. One reason, it is suggested, why state press associations were slow to appear was that early wire service organizations with their regular contact and periodic meetings provided a sounding board for editors' grievances ranging far beyond wire service matters.

War broke out between the New York City AP and the Morse telegraph system about 1850 and the Morse people sponsored their own wire service, Abbot & Winans, to compete with the AP. Faxton, still a loyal Morse franchisee, enlisted all the papers on his line in upstate New York to receive the Abbot & Winans news report.[50] An aggressive recruiting campaign coupled with a better news report and some telegraphic leverage, had retrieved all these papers for the New York AP service by the mid-1850s. The New York State AP maintained its separate identity until 1897 when the death of the old United Press left the Associated Press of Illinois free to create a single national wire service, destroying the state and regional wire organizations in the process.

First Wire Service -- Footnotes

[1] The Newspaper in America, The Evolution of a Social Institution, rep. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 495-96.

[2] History and Present Condition of the Newspaper and Periodical Press of the United States, with a Catalogue of the Publications of the Census Year (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884).

[3] Seward's address, delivered before the Oneida, N.Y., Historical Society on Dec. 31, 1878, was reprinted as "The Telegraph and Associated Press," in Transactions (Utica: Oneida Historical Society, 1881), pp. 156-60.

[4] Oliver Gramling, AP: The Story of News (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1940), p. 21.

[5] American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 251.

[6] Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America, An Interpretative History of the Mass Media, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 141.

[7] Richard A. Schwarzlose, "Early Telegraphic News Dispatches: Forerunner of the AP," Journalism Quarterly, 51:595-601 (Winter, 1974).

[8] It is unclear whether these earliest news dispatches shared by New York City newspapers were provided by the Associated Press in its formative stages or by an independent news broker such as Alexander Jones or Francis A. Abbot. See ibid. for a discussion of this matter.

[9] New York State Associated Press Papers, Oneida Historical Society, Utica, New York. (Hereafter cited as the NYSAP Papers.) The collection consists of a 150-page volume of mounted correspondence, contracts, ledgers, and other documents, entitled "Associated Press and Free Delivery of Newspapers 1846-47," contributed by Alexander Seward, editor of the Utica Daily Gazette. The Society lists the collection as "New York

State Newspapers-Publishers' Correspondence." Seward's address to the Society, see op. cit., was prompted by the appearance of James D. Reid's The Telegraph in America, Its Founders, Promoters and Noted Men (New York: Darby Brothers, 1879) and was meant to set Reid's record straight on the dates of AP's upstate operation, among other matters.

[10] James G. Riggs and Ralph M. Faust, "New York Becomes the Empire State," History of the State of New York, Alexander C. Flick, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), VI:334.

[11] For more on the early development of the various lines of Morse telegraph, see Robert Luther Thompson's Wiring a Continent: The History of the Telegraph Industry in the United States, 1832-1866 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 39-93.

[12] Quoted in ibid., p. 67.

[13] Reid, op. cit., p. 308.

[14] U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 Census, Vol. II, Characteristics of the Population: New York (Pt. 32), pp. 8-10, and Winifred Gregory, ed., American Newspapers, 1821-1936 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1937), pp. 438-98.

[15] Seward, op. cit., pp. 156-57.

[16] Ibid., p. 158.

[17] Manchester & Broyman to The Publisher of the Gazette. NYSAP Papers.

[18] H. S. Winants to Publisher, Utica Daily Gazette, Feb. 6, 1846. NYSAP Papers. ("Postscript" was a label used by some 1840s dailies over their latest telegraphic dispatches.)

[19] Cushman to R. Northway & Co. NYSAP Papers.

[20] J. Stringham [?] to Printers of Utica Gazette. NYSAP Papers.

[21] Isaac Butts to Messrs Northway & Co. NYSAP Papers.

[22] Since the bulk of the correspondence in the New York State AP Papers consists of letters addressed to the Gazette, there are no copies of these early circulars. References to Gazette circulars in letters from the west, however, indicate that Northway and Seward sent circulars on Feb. 12, 14, 16, and 26 and March 10 to various editors west of Utica.

[23] James Kinney to Messrs R. Northway & Co. NYSAP Papers.

[24] John C. Merrill & Co. to R. Northway & Co., Feb. 18, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[25] George Dawson to Alexander Seward, Feb. 19, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[26] Manchester & Broyman to Messrs R. Northway & Co., March 4, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[27] Henry Oliphant to R. Northway & Co., March 6, 1946. NYSAP Papers.

[28] Manchester & Broyman to Messrs Northway & Co., March 7, 1846, and A. M. Clapp & Co., to Messrs R. Northway & Co., March 12, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[29] Jerome [?] & Brothers to R. Northway & Co., March 12, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[30] S. F. Smith to Northway & Co., March 20, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[31] W[illiam] Lacy to Messrs Northway & Co., May 27, 1846, and W[illiam] Lacy to Alex. Seward, June 13, 1846. NYSAP Papers. Nothing can be found on Lacy other than his affiliation with the Albany Argus, which was ascertained from the return address he used in correspondence with the Utica Gazette.

[32] Alexander Jones, Historical Sketch of the Electric Telegraph: Including Its Rise and Progress in the United States (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), p. 148.

[33] Numerous pre-1846 arrangements for news-gathering among several newspapers might be called wire services, stretching back to the Committees of Correspondence beginning in 1772 and including several harbor news-gathering schemes used in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. (For one of the more complete accounts of these pre-telegraphic news arrangements, see Lee op. cit., pp. 481-92.) The author, however, defines a wire service as a journalistic organization for intercity movement of news, relying primarily, if not exclusively, on an intercity communication system, as distinguished from reliance on a transportation system. This definition relegates all pre-semaphore or pre-telegraph news movement arrangements to a pre-wire service status. (Unlike France, American journalistic use of semaphore systems was spotty, inconsistent and disorganized.) For an elaboration of the transportation-communication distinction, see Allan R. Pred, Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States System of Cities, 1790-1840 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), esp. pp. 12-19.

[34] Schwarzlose, op. cit., pp. 597-98.

[35] Manchester & Broyman to Messrs R. Northway & Co., Feb. 28, 1846; and Manchester & Broyman to Messrs R. Northway & Co., March 4, 1846; and A. M. Clapp & Co. to Messrs R. Northway & Co., March 12, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[36] In 1846 the editors had no formal name for their group, such as the New York State Associated Press, but the use of that name here anticipates the group's eventual name.

[37] Seward, op. cit., p. 159.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., p. 160.

[41] "Proposition to Telegraph Co.," dated Aug. 5, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[42] Untitled, printed circular, signed T. M. Foote, J. Barber and A. Seward, Committee, dated Aug. 18, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[43] [George] Snow to Mr. Seward. NYSAP Papers.

[44] George Snow to The Editor of the Utica Gazette, undated. NYSAP Papers. Francis Nicoll Zabriskie, Horace Greeley, the Editor (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1890), p. 80. Snow was apparently a respected New York journalist. Horace Greeley says the following about him: "Mr. George M. Snow, a friend of my own age, who had had considerable mercantile experience, took charge of the Financial or Wall-Street department [of the New York Tribune when the paper was founded in 1841] and retained it for more than twenty-two years; becoming ultimately a heavy stockholder in, and a trustee of, the [Tribune] concern; resigning his trust only when (in 1863) he departed for Europe in ill health; returning but to die two years later." Greeley's Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: Ford & Co., 1868), p. 139.

[45] Loc. cit.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Gregory, op. cit., p. 438.

[48] Untitled financial and service-loss tabulation for Sept. 9 to Oct. 15, 1846. NYSAP Papers.

[49] Quoted in Alvin F. Harlow, Old Wires and New Waves, the History of the Telegraph, Telephone and Wireless (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1936), pp. 178-79.

[50] Henry O'Rielly, "Facts Concerning the 'Cunard Letter,'" American Telegraph Magazine (April-May-June, 1853), p. 250, where a letter to O'Rielly from Abbot & Winans is reprinted, listing the subscribers to the Abbot & Winans news report as of Aug. 18, 1852.

The news report of the New York State AP for Monday, Nov. 2, 1846, is reproduced here as it appeared that day on page 3 of the Utica Gazette. It is representative of the State AP's news dispatches telegraphed from Albany for a period of several months following linkage of Albany and New York City by telegraph on Sept. 9, 1846. A brief discussion of this example follows the report.

Great Gale at Key West

Forty Vessels Ashore -- Fifty Lives Lost -- Great Destruction of Property

NEW YORK, Saturday, Oct. 31, 2½ P.M.

The Southern mail brings news of a terrific gale in the Gulf of Mexico, on the 11th inst. at Key West. No more than 6 out of 600 houses were left unroofed or blown down. Three hundred are estimated to have blown down. The Custom House and Marine Hospital were unroofed. It is supposed that of Government property destroyed the amount is $300,000.

The loss of life is very great. A great many persons were drowned and killed by falling buildings. The lighthouse and dwelling house attached, were destroyed and fourteen souls perished in these buildings. The Sand Key lighthouse is gone and the buildings and people in them.

The United States brig Perry ran ashore but it is thought she may be saved. Com Sloat was on board her. All the hands were saved.

Four or five vessels were capsized in the gale, and nearly all on board perished.

Between 30 and 40 vessels were ashore on the Reef, and in the vicinity of Key West. Many of these vessels and the most part of their cargoes will be totally lost.

The current ran six miles an hour through the streets of Key West. As far as ascertained 50 persons had lost their lives. Parents were separated from their children. Confusion, terror and dismay reigned.

It commenced blowing from the N.E. on the morning of the 11th inst. By one o'clock it blew a perfect hurricane and the tide rose rapidly and the storm raged with incredible violence until near midnight when it abated. On the 12th it blew a moderate gale and gradually subsided.

Among the vessels lost was the revenue cutter. The Spanish schooner Villa Neirva was lost with thirty lives.

* Great apprehension is expressed by Com. Sloat whether the British steamer for Vera Cruz, which left

about the 9th inst. could survive the late gale if she was unfortunately caught in it.

It is impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy the loss of life and property.

The fury of the gale was altogether without a parallel even on the coast of Florida.

RHODE ISLAND SENATOR -- John H. Clark, Whig, has been chosen by the Rhode Island Legislature to succeed J. F. Simmons to the United States Senate.

---

* The Slave boy, Geo. Kirk, has again been set free and it is understood has left town for the North.

---

* Cotwell, Dem., is elected to Congress from Yancey's district, by 49 majority.

---

* Com. Sloat arrived at Washington on Friday, and had an interview with the President and Cabinet.

New-York, Oct. 31, 8 P.M.

THE REVOLT IN VENEZUELA, DREADFUL MASSACRE. -- A letter from Puerto Cabello, dated Oct. 9th, confirms the news recently received via Baltimore in regard to the disturbances in Venezuela. The letter says affairs are somewhat better although military preparations are made in order to restore the confidence of the country. The object of the Guzman party is said to have been to liberate the slaves, which they effected in many places & plundered and murdered all the whites they met with. Many of the planters have suffered from those horrid depredations and will doubtless lose their entire crops for want of hands to gather them.

---

* A duel was fought at San Antonio, Texas, on the 26th Sept., between Lieut S. G. Ward and Thomas Yeatman, both from Tennessee. The affair was about a lady. Both were wounded.

LATER FROM SANTA FE. -- News has been received to Sept. 17th. Gen. Kearney had returned to the South after a successful tour. The people, except the rich, received him with joy.

He was to march for California on the 25th September.

/There followed four paragraphs of market quotations, datelined New York, Oct. 31, at 2:30 p.m. and 8 p.m./

This dispatch was principally the work of Agent George M. Snow in New York City. The Florida hurricane story is a rewrite of a longer version appearing on October 31 in the New York Tribune,

datelined Washington, Oct. 30. "The Slave boy, Geo. Kirk . . ." was a New York City item, although in the Utica paper this is unclear; the story appeared in slightly different form November 2 in the Tribune. The same is true of the "Rhode Island Senator . . ." item, which was not a telegraph dispatch in the Tribune.

The Congressional summaries were not as yet making their way up the Hudson to the State AP and neither were most of the telegraphic items appearing in the Tribune. Those few telegraphic stories transplanted from the Tribune to upstate telegraphic news columns were usually shorter, rewritten and a day or so older, as in the case of hurricane story. The upstate editors had arranged for their report to move from Albany between 8 and 11 p.m. The New York editors, however, began receiving their reports around midnight, pieces of which would not appear on the State AP circuits until the following afternoon. This gave the evening papers of the upstate group a break on a few same-day datelines.